

Bellevue Police Department



Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is a serious safety issue in our state and throughout the country. It is estimated that 2 million workers are victims of workplace violence each year.

According to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, there were 13 on-the-job homicides and seven workplace suicides in 2009. This accounted for nearly one third of the 62 total fatalities resulting from work-related injuries in Washington State. As such, the topic of workplace violence is a growing concern for employers, employees, and for law enforcement officials.

What is workplace violence?

NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, defines workplace violence as "violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed at persons at work or on duty."

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety further defines workplace violence as "any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted in his or her employment."

As you can imagine, workplace violence covers a very broad spectrum of inappropriate behavior ranging from acts of intimidation and bullying to homicide.

Who needs a workplace violence program?

The answer is easy. Everyone! Under the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's General Duty Clause, every employee is legally guaranteed a safe place to work. Each business owner owes it to themselves, their employees, and their customers to provide the safest possible environment with which to conduct business.

Under OSHA's General Duty Clause, every employee is guaranteed a safe place to work!

Who commits workplace violence?

Violators are generally classified into four basic categories.

- **Criminals:** Criminals will not generally have a connection to the workplace and will only interact with the business in order to commit a crime, such as in a robbery.
- **Employees:** Workplace violence by employees consists of acts committed by either current or former employees of the business.

Workplace Violence

- **Customers:** This includes violence directed at a workplace by persons such as their customers, clients, patients, students, or inmates.
- **Third Parties:** Third party violence involves persons who don't have a direct connection to the workplace, but they have a relationship with someone who does. Often times this is a spouse, former spouse, or someone who they've had a dating relationship with.

Statistics show that criminals account for the majority, nearly 80%, of all workplace homicides. Statistics further show that occupational groups that operate at night and have access to cash are more likely to become victims.



What causes workplace violence?

Unfortunately, there is no one specific profile to identify a potentially violent individual. However, violent behavior is usually accompanied by one or more factors which may expose a person's propensity for violence. Such factors could include the following:

- A history of violent criminal behavior (a career criminal).
- Mental illness
- Financial problems
- Relationship troubles
- Disgruntled employees
- Substance abuse

Recognizing and addressing these factors is a substantial step in preventing workplace violence.

Tips to help reduce the risk of workplace violence and manage volatile situations!

1. Review and update your site security procedures and training.
2. Develop a workplace violence awareness program that keeps employees involved.
3. Promote a working environment that it consistent, healthy, and respectful.
4. Encourage employees to take advantage of employee assistance programs.
5. Address issues of misconduct in private.
6. Document and take administrative action before problems get out of control.
7. Be calm and professional. Avoid being argumentative and sarcastic.
8. Have a plan before engaging in a contact that could potentially result in a extremely negative or violent response.
9. Focus on defusing or deescalating the situation when it becomes volatile.
10. Call 911 in an emergency.

If you are interested in having Workplace Violence Awareness Training at your business, please contact Detective Ray Lofink at 425-452-2979 or by e-mail at rlofink@bellevuewa.gov.

Bellevue Police Department

Crime Prevention Unit

450 110th Ave NE

Bellevue, WA 98004

425-452-6917